

## Poetry.

### OUR EXAMPLE.

JOHN KEBLE.

We scatter seeds with careless hand,  
And dream we ne'er shall see them more:

But for a thousand years  
Their fruit appears,  
In weeds that mar the land,  
Or healthful store.

The deeds we do, the words we say—  
Into still air they seem to fleet,  
We count them ever past;  
But they shall last,  
In the dread judgment they  
And we shall meet!

I charge thee by the years gone by,  
For the love's sake of brethren dear,  
Keep thou the one true way  
In work and play,  
Lest in that world their cry  
Of woe thou hear!

## Book and Tract Work.

### THE LORD AND THE PENNIES.

It has been aptly said, that, as a rule, Christian people save their pennies "for the Lord and the organ-grinders." No doubt pennies are used to a large extent in small transactions outside of charity and worship. But it is past question that they are largely used in the "worship and work of the Lord." Now we do not despise a penny when it is consecrated to God, and represents the ability of the giver; but we are profoundly assured that there is no proper relation between the mass of pennies which find their way into the offering plates and the well-dressed worshippers from whose ample hands they are dropped into the plates. From a little child, and from the hands of the poor, a penny may have some significance as an act of worship; but from the hands of an able-bodied man, a well-dressed woman, a young man with a silver headed cane and gold watch, who has just thrown away the stubb of a cigar, or the end of a cigarette, a penny dropped into the offering plate is an abomination in the sight of God and man. Yet the number of those who contribute a penny on the Sabbath day to the "worship and work" of Christ, is in excess of those who contribute more than that sum. We have been at some pains to verify this statement by a careful inquiry into the facts as shown by the collections taken in various churches and religious assemblies.

The instinct of meanness is more apt to show itself in connection with a church collection than in any other place. There are men who will almost quarrel with a neighbor for the privilege of paying his car fare, who will press a friend to accept

a cigar, or some other courtesy of like value, who will persistently select the pennies from the other loose change in their pocket in order to put them in the collection plate, and these are not "worldly" men, but professing Christians. There are scores and hundreds of young men who spend from ten to twenty-five cents every day for cigarettes and cigars, who never think of putting more than a penny into the weekly collection plate. There are men who are not considered mean or illiberal in other things, who are careful that their children are sent off to Sunday-school, and are equally careful to see that each little "tot" is duly provided with a "penny." To furnish them with a penny, every other coin in the pocket will be scratched over till a sufficient number are found. It never seems to have suggested itself to the man that a ten cent piece, or at least a nickel, might answer as well as a penny. A penny seems to represent the idea of worship to their minds, and perhaps their hearts, better than any other piece of money. Out of a thousand pieces of money offered on the Lord's day, in a well known church, somewhat famous for its activity, more than half the number is sure to be pennies. It is true that the larger proportion comes from the evening congregation, who are welcome to occupy the pews and seats put at their disposal without reserve, and which they are not slow to accept. Nevertheless, a goodly part of them come from the regular worshippers.

It has long been a baffling question to us why it is that this streak of meanness comes out of men and women so habitually in connection with the service of God's house? Dollars for personal pleasure, little extravagances and indulgences, and pennies and nickels for God. Surely it must be either that the heart is closed with ingratitude, or else it is pure (bad) habit and thoughtlessness.

It may be well to raise the question as to the meaning of the collection in our churches, and with what spirit and intent does the offerer give his penny or his pound? There are two thoughts involved in a church collection; or shall we say two motives? One is, that the public worship of God may be maintained and the benevolent work of the church carried forward. The other is, that an offering of money is a method of expressing thanksgiving to God for his abundant mercies, especially his abounding and continuous temporal mercies. Men and women are not asked to contribute their money on the same principle that they are demanded to pay their money upon entering a place of amusement or in consideration of service rendered, of goods de-

livered. The offerings made in the house of God are supposed to be "free will offerings," springing from a sense of religious obligation or gratitude.

Let us first consider the offering as representing the obligation resting on men to support the cause of Christ, and the benevolent work of the church. Is it possible that that obligation can be measured and confessed by a penny? We speak now of the average church-goer's ability. Nor do we forget that many of the offerers are among the number who have hired seats and thus contribute to the support of the church. But, after all is said and done in that direction, can it be said in fairness that a penny does represent an honorable portion of obligation? If this obligation does not imply something more than that which a penny represents, we must be mistaken as to the general character and worth of Christianity.

But, in the second place, the offerings on the Sabbath day ought to represent a worshipful sense of thanksgiving to God for all his goodness to us in temporal as well as in spiritual things. Is it conceivable that a man who is thankful at all can give expression of his thanksgiving by selecting a penny out of his loose change, and deliberately offering that to God? We are not speaking of poor widows or little children who are dependent upon others to give them their pennies, but of the average church-goer. The man who comes to church with a \$5.00 hat on his head, with from \$50.00 to \$150.00 worth of clothes on his back, with a gold watch and chain in his vest; the woman with a \$10.00 bonnet on her head, a \$150.00 seal-skin sack on her back, and clothes besides, representing from \$50.00 to \$200.00; the young man who spends from \$1.00 to \$3.00 per week at the theater, or other entertainments, who sports a gold or silver-headed cane, and encases his hands in kid gloves and ribbons, jewels of gold and jewels of silver, is a creature fair and lovely to look at, and who, no doubt, takes delight in being seen in fine array at the church services—these are the people who pour out the pennies (one at a time) into the collection plates. What does it mean? If it is the offering of an unbeliever, who does not recognize obligation and has nothing to be thankful for, but only does it because he is ashamed to have the plate pass him, well and good; and equally well and *even better than good, if he gave nothing*; but, if it is the offering of a Christian man or woman, who has been bought with the priceless blood of Christ, and is intended to express obligation or thanksgiving, then God help these robbers and mockers who rob and mock God with their pennies.